



Tips for College Parents and Students

How safe is the campus?

Important information is found in the Annual Campus Security Act Report. Federal law requires colleges and universities to supply information disclosing campus security policies and three years worth of selected crime statistics. It should be on the school's website, or ask the campus safety or admissions department for it.

What kind of campus safety department does the college have?

There are three different models: a full police department (like a city department); non-sworn, un-armed officers employed by the college; and contract employees from a private security department.

What should a campus safety department offer to the community?

A campus safety department should provide a wide range of services, from emergency response for medicals to campus escorts. Active patrol of the campus and buildings should be standard practice. Officers should be visible and known within the community. They should be accessible. The department should proactively market itself and the services it offers, as well as find ways to educate the community about personal safety issues.

What training do the officers have and how often do they have it?

Officers should have ongoing training including crisis intervention, cultural diversity, first aid, defensive-tactics, local laws and institutional policies, etc. This allows officers to respond to incidents in an efficient, professional and caring manner within the expectations of the college or university.

What training does the department have in responding to crisis situations?

There needs to be ongoing training and policies that guide officers in their responses. Critical response plans should be tested and evaluated to review their effectiveness in preparation for potential incidents. The policies not only need to link the internal operation of the school, but also with the police, fire, and emergency operations in the local community.

Is the campus safety operation visible to the community?

During tours of campus, admissions staff should talk about the campus safety operation the same way they highlight the newest technology. Public Safety should be readily available to meet with prospective parents or students who wish to learn about the department. Additionally, the staff should be present at on-campus orientation, and other special events, to meet and greet guests and be available to discuss the department's function.

Colleges/universities are part of the communities where they are located. Safety issues within the campus community can impact the surrounding neighborhood, and vice versa. As such, the campus safety department should cultivate a strong, working relationship with the local police department and other local emergency services.

What methods of communication are used in the case of crisis?

There should be multiple methods of communication in an effort to reach all parts of the campus, at all times of the day, in a timely manner. Incident details and instructions should be clear and concise.

What resources does the college or university have in place to assist persons in crisis or need of other help? How well are they known?

Ask people on campus about all of the above areas. This is no different than asking about academics, athletics, scholarships, or the quality of the food served on-campus. Parents and students can then make their own conclusions about whether safety practices are satisfactory.

Where can I go for further information?

<http://www.securityoncampus.org>

<http://ope.ed.gov/security/>

<http://www.higheredcenter.org/pubs/articles/ask-officials.html>